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The last Outfit: Can we prepare for **DEATH** ?

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Structure of Presentation

- **Death Attitude among Hong Kong Chinese**
- **Introduction of the Project Background**
- **Theoretical Background**
- **Introduction of the Experiential Exercises of the Project**
- **Findings of Pre-Post Effectiveness**



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Death as a Taboo Topic



非禮勿言

Thou shalt not
talk

非禮勿視
Thou shalt not
see

非禮勿聽

Thou shalt not
listen to

In contrast,

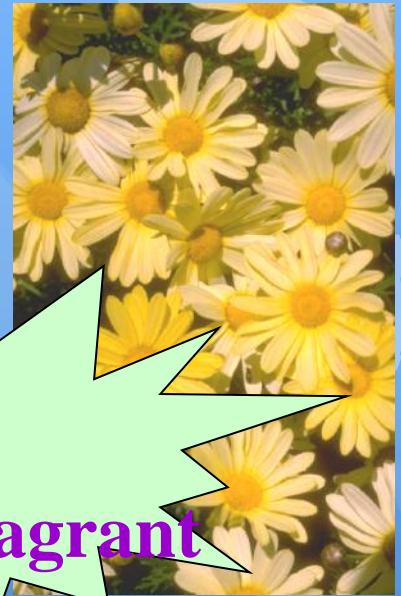
Longevity is a blessing



Euphemisms for Death



賣鹹鴨蛋
Selling Salted Egg



香咗
Become fragrant



瓜老襯
Become Melon



歸西
Going Westward



移咗民
Migrated

Euphemisms for Death



“Doot”
嘟㗎



Going back to heaven
返㗎天家



“Ding”
叮㗎

Bye-Bye
拜拜



Going down
落㗎下邊

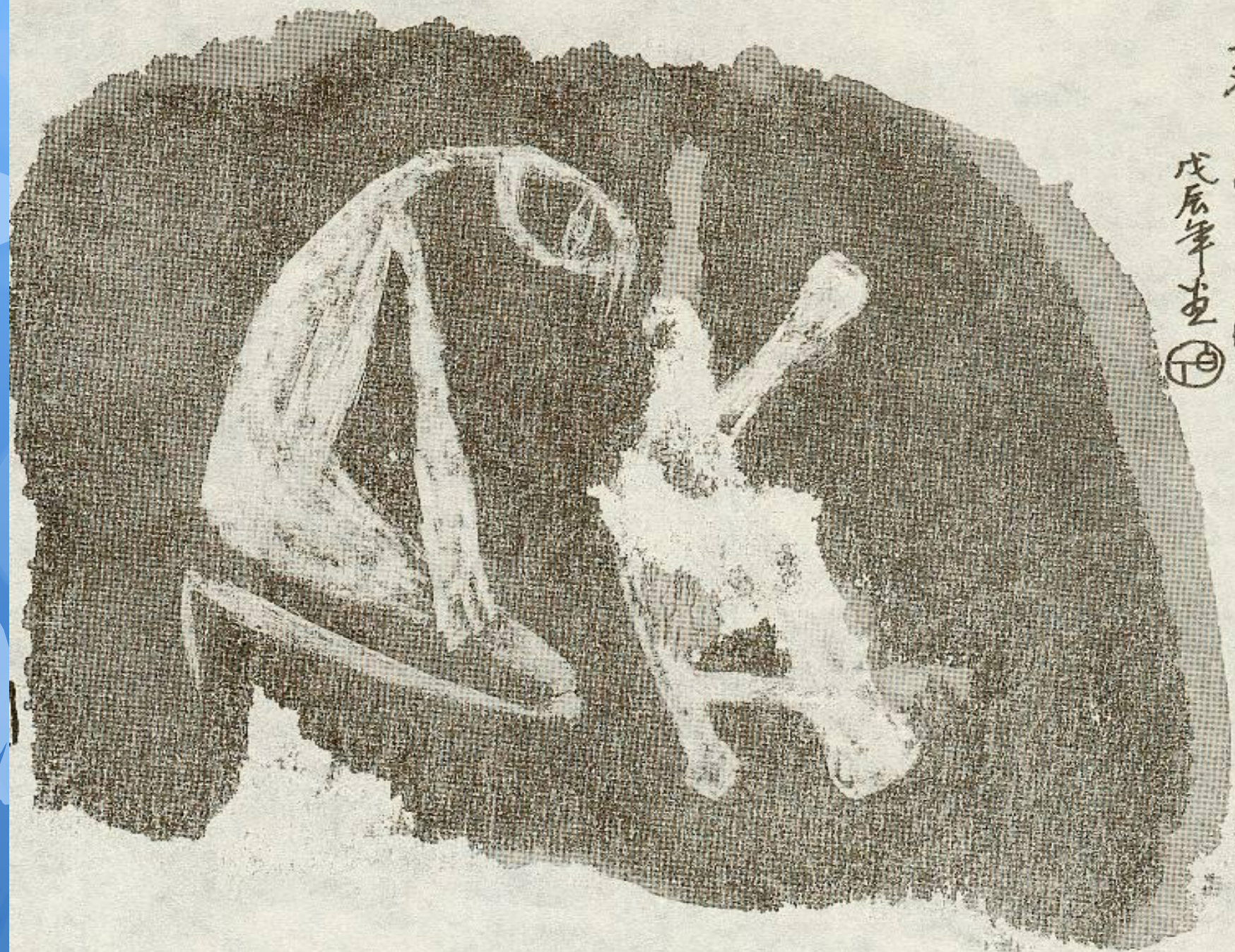
Avoiding the word 4



**No 4th, 13th,
14th, & 24th
floor**

瓦甲骨文作

戊辰年五



Observations in Training among Chinese Professionals in Hong Kong

- “It is so good, but ...”
- Disconnection of brain and heart
- Tearful eyes
- Follow-up sharing of personal experiences



What are the Death Attitudes Among Clinicians?

Would their death attitude affects their work with clients in death and dying related scenario?



**But researches also inform
us...**

The Therapist's Use of Self (Rowan & Jacobs, 2002)

**Therapist as a moderator and
mediator in therapeutic changes**
(Sexton, 2007)



Researches inform us ...

Clinicians' report **discomfort** in working with death and dying (Kirchberg & Neimeyer, 1991)

Death Anxiety and **death attitudes** affect the **distress level** and **empathetic understanding** (Servaty, Krejci, & Hayslip, 1996; Kirchberg, Neimeyer, & James, 1998)

Burnout (Ben-Zur & Michael, 2007), **Compassionate Fatigue** (Figley, 2002; Strom-Gottfried & Mowbray, 2006), **Vicarious traumatization** (McCann & Pearlman, 1990) and **Professional grieving** (Papadatou, 2000) are derivatives of work-related stress in helping professionals.



Oxygen Masks: Wear your own mask before you attend to the dependents



Importance of Care for the Clinicians



What kind of competence do we need in working with clients facing death and bereavement ?



**KNOWLEDGE
COMPETENCE**



**EMOTIONAL
COMPETENCE**



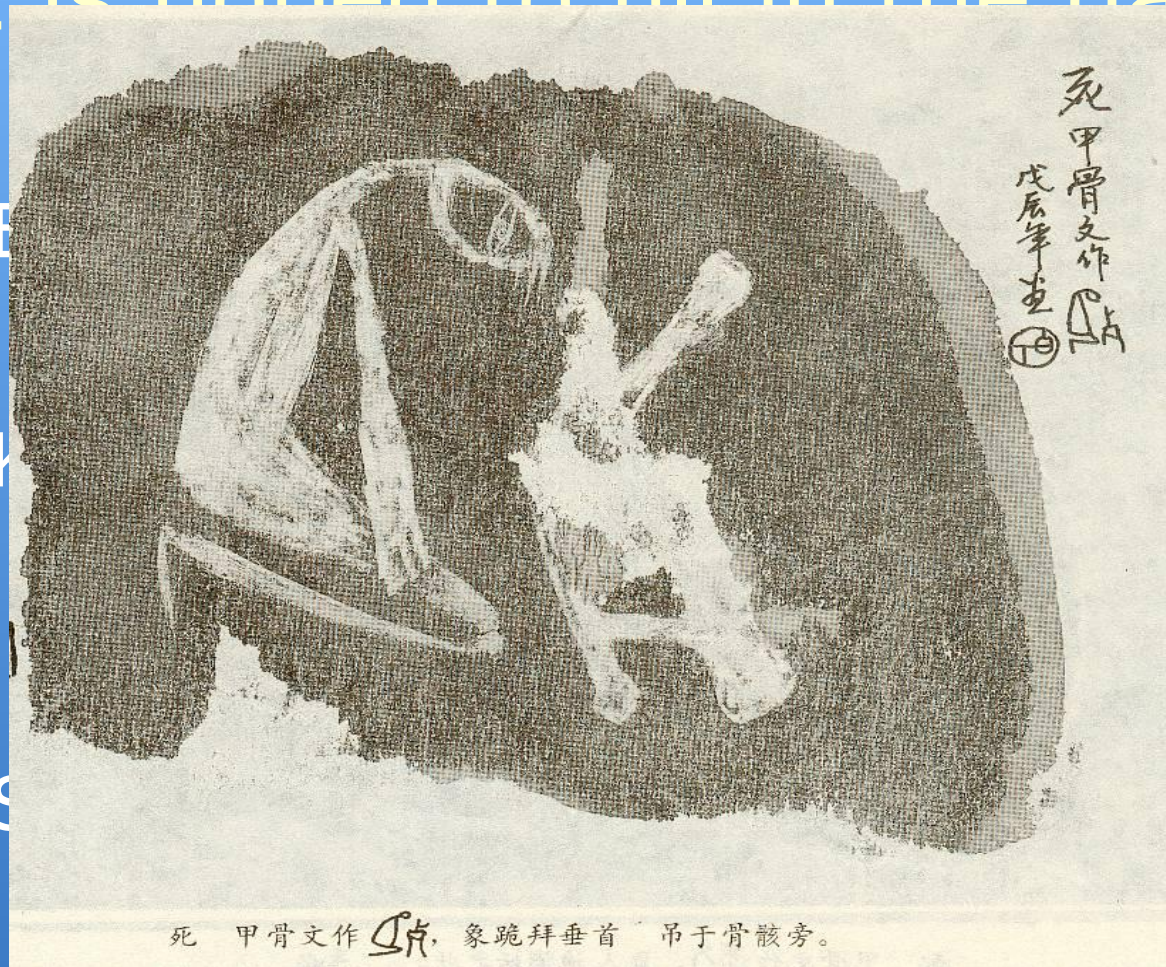
**PRACTICE
COMPETENCE**

ENABLE is hoped to fill in the gap

■

■

■



- Intervention

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Empowerment
Network of
Aadjustment to
Bereavement and
Loss in
End-of-life



Ripple Effect



Project ENABLE

Primary ENABLING Programme

Training &
Manuals

Secondary ENABLING Programme

Experiential
Workshop &
Training

Professionals - ENABLERS

Life & Death
Education

Preventive or
Remedial
Support

Elderly and families

Dying patients, families
and bereaved families

Secondary ENABLING Programme

3-day Training
on
Anticipatory
Grief

4-day Training
on
Bereavement
Counseling

8-day Training
on
Complicated
Grief



3-Day Experiential Life Rejuvenating Workshops

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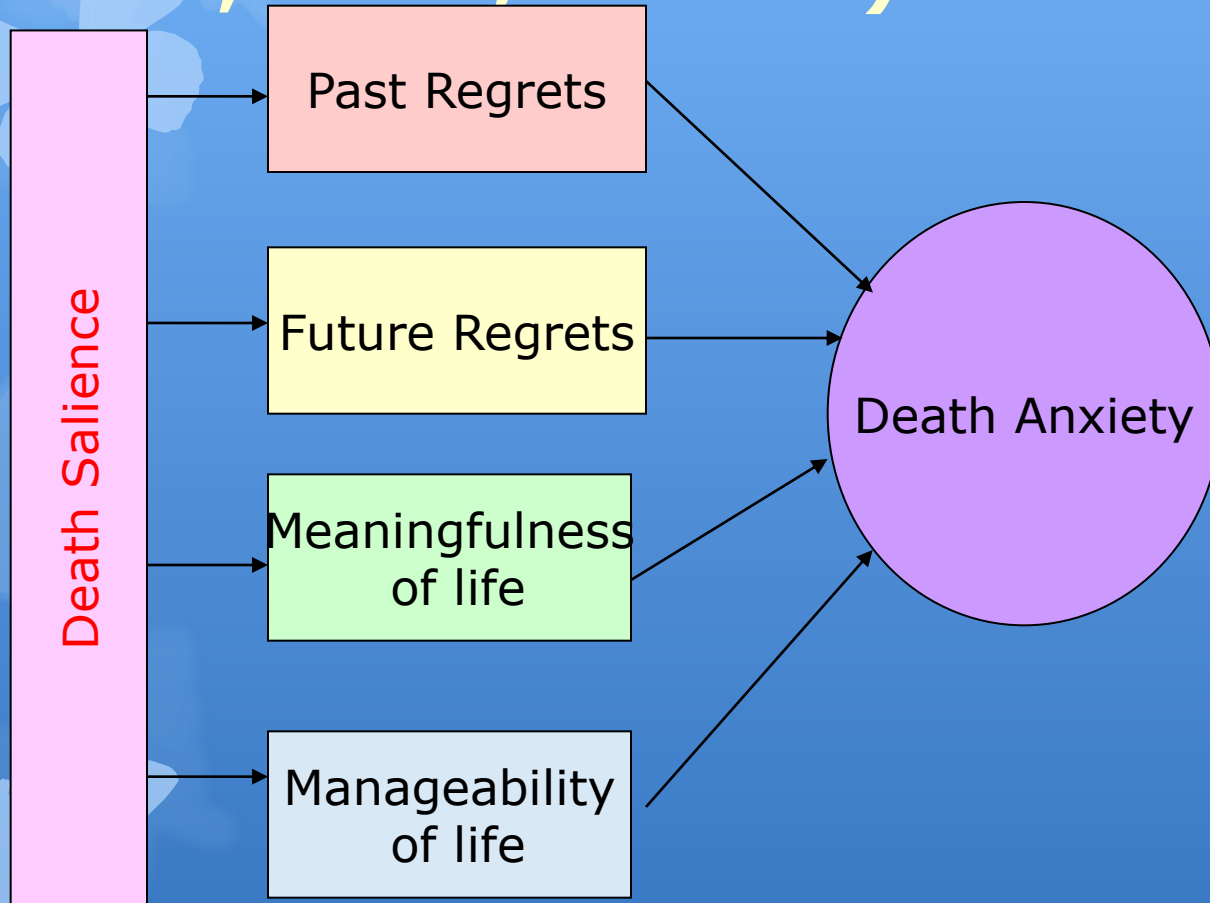
Death Anxiety

“...a cluster of death attitudes characterized by fear, threat, unease, discomfort and similar negative emotional reactions, as well as anxiety in the psychodynamic sense as a kind of diffuse fear that has no clear object.”

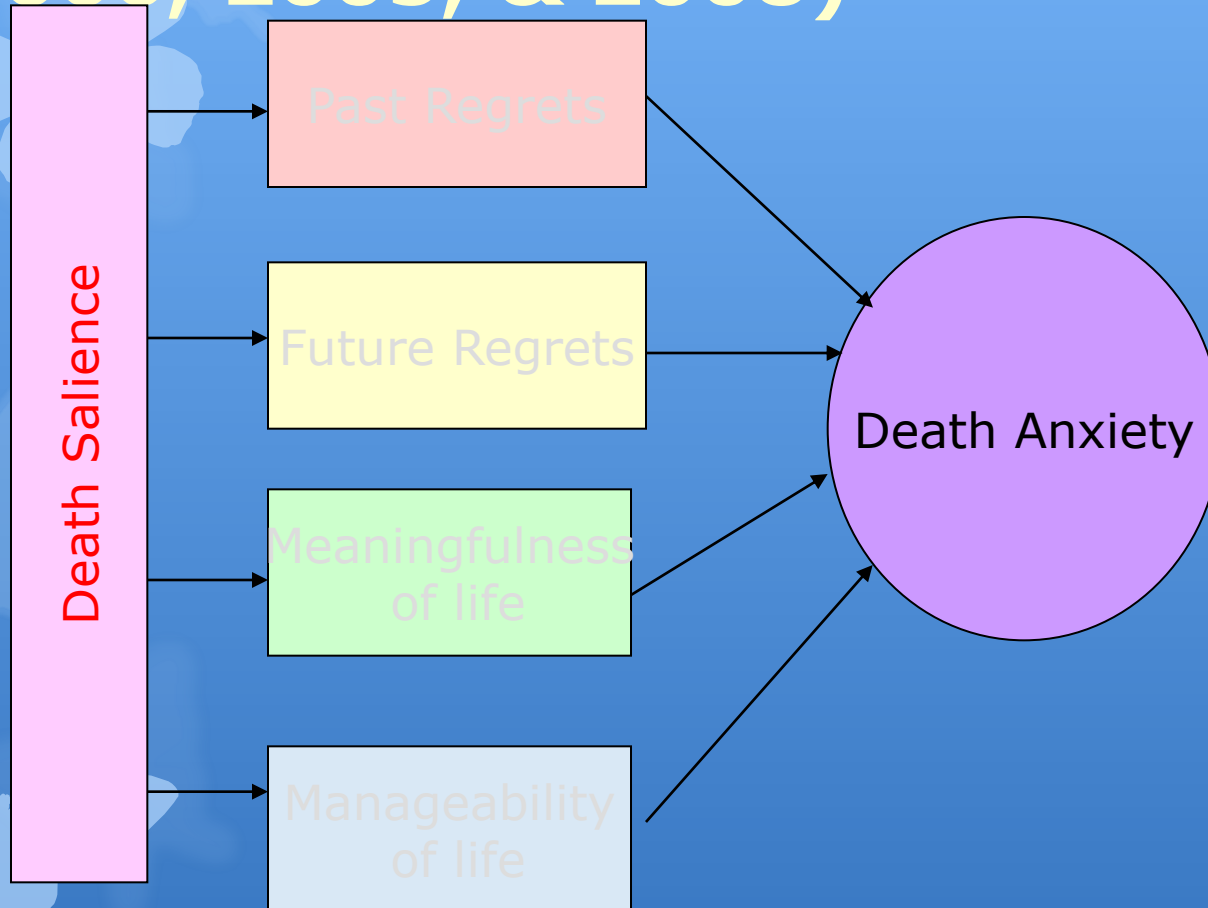
(Neimeyer, Moser, & Wittkowski, 2003).



Tomer-Eliason Model (1996, 2000, 2005, & 2008)



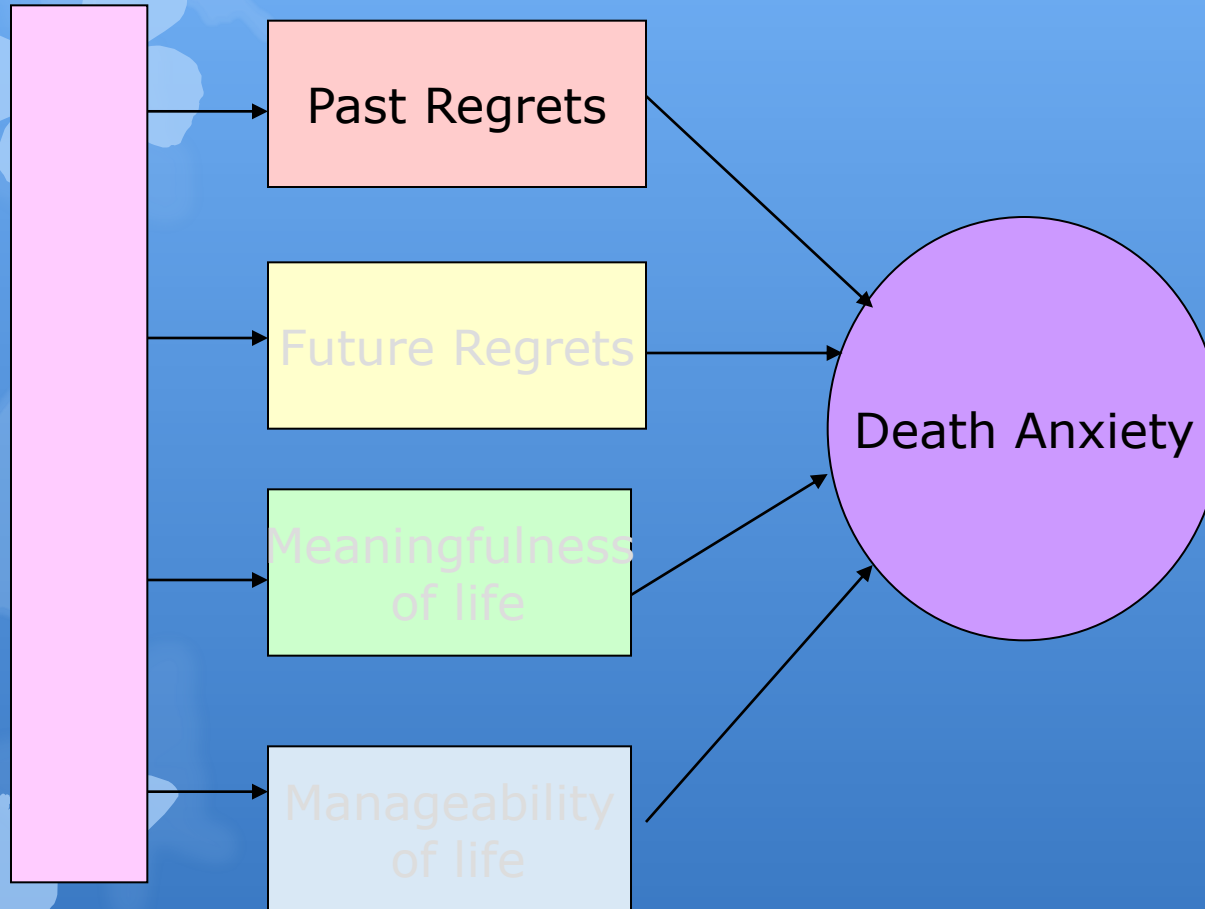
Tomer-Eliason Model (1996, 2000, 2005, & 2008)



**Death
Salience**

**Extent to
which
individuals
contemplate
their own
mortality
and death**

Tomer-Eliason Model (1996, 2000, 2005, & 2008)

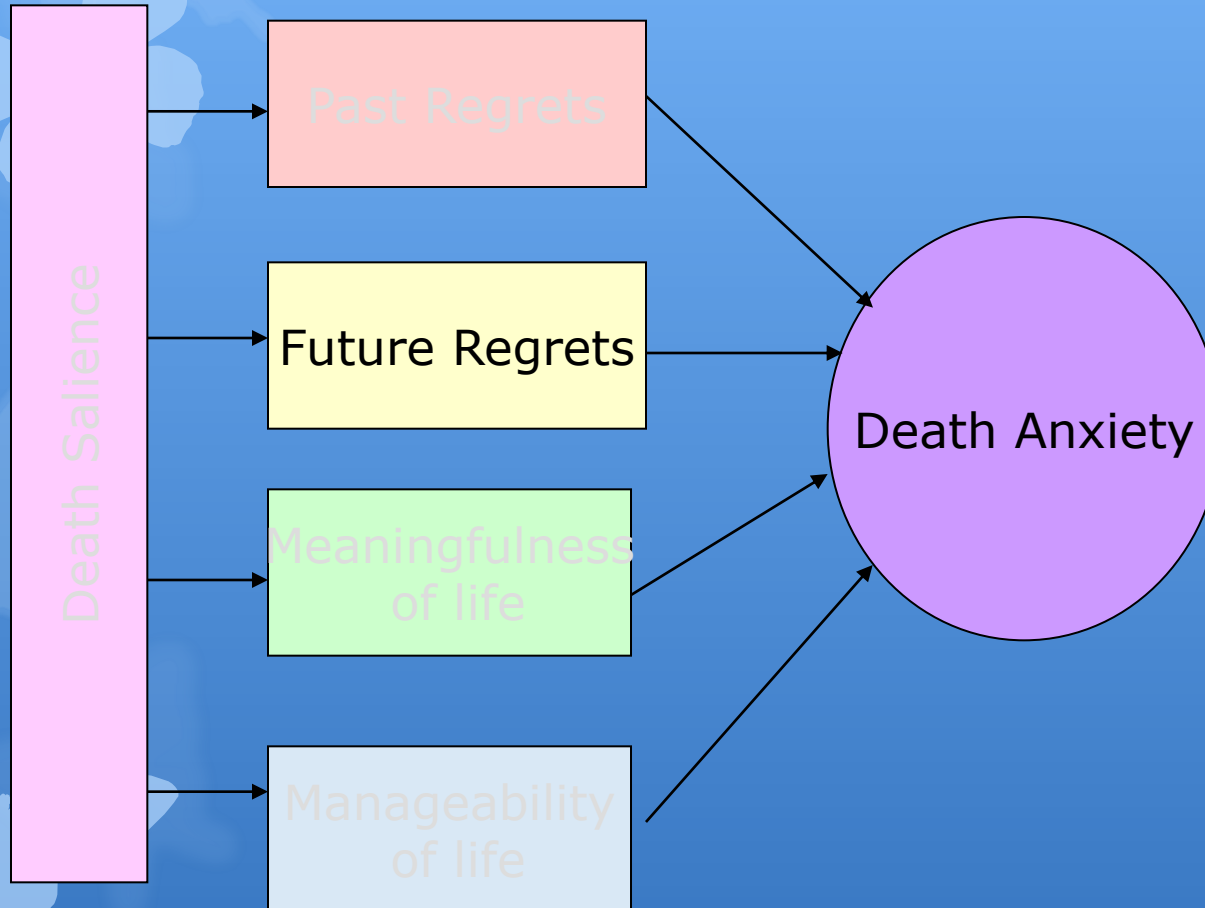


Past Regrets

perceived unfulfilled accomplishment s of life goals caused by omission of something that should have been done, or commission of something that should have been avoided.



Tomer-Eliason Model (1996, 2000, 2005, & 2008)

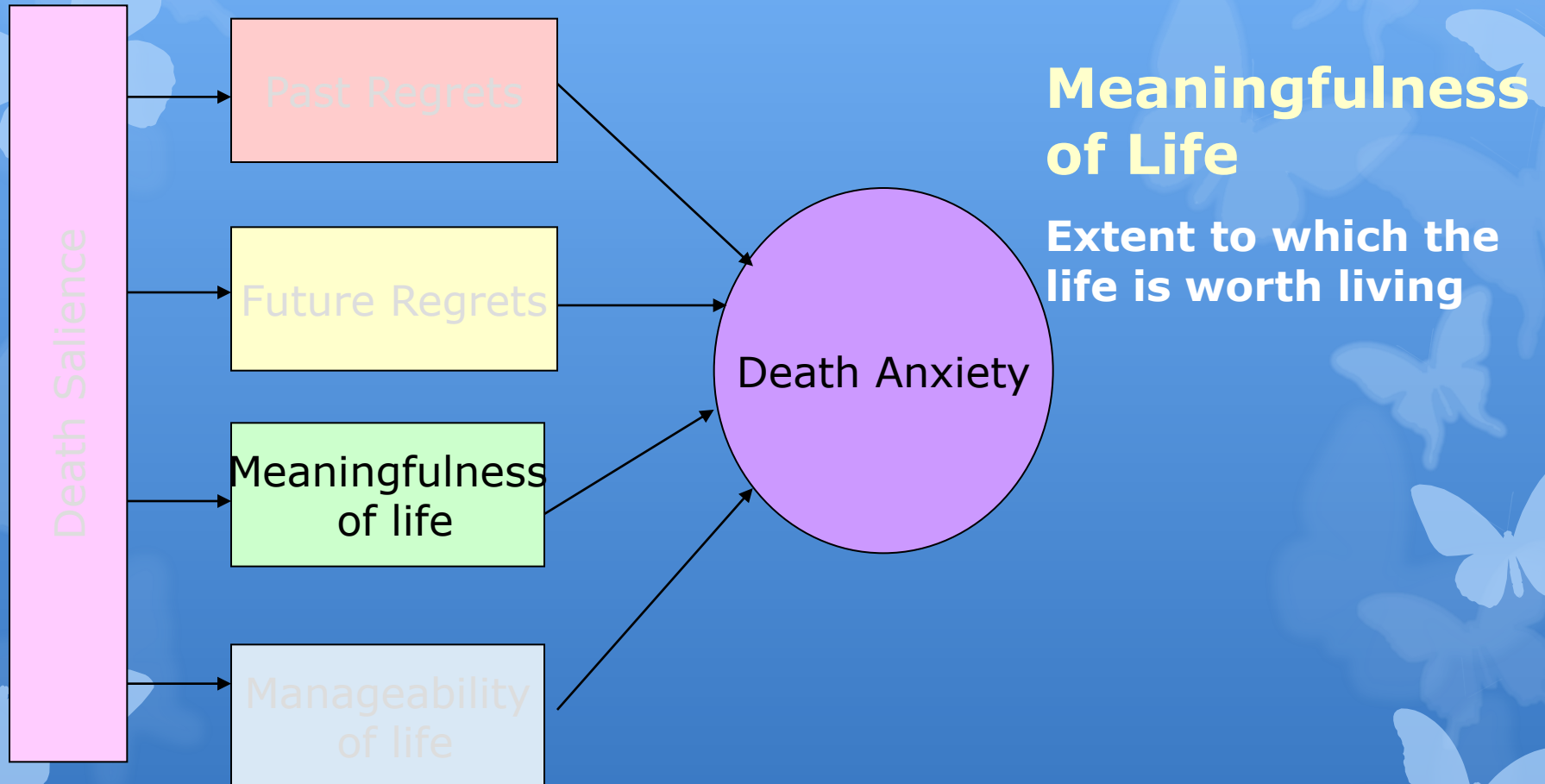


Future Regrets

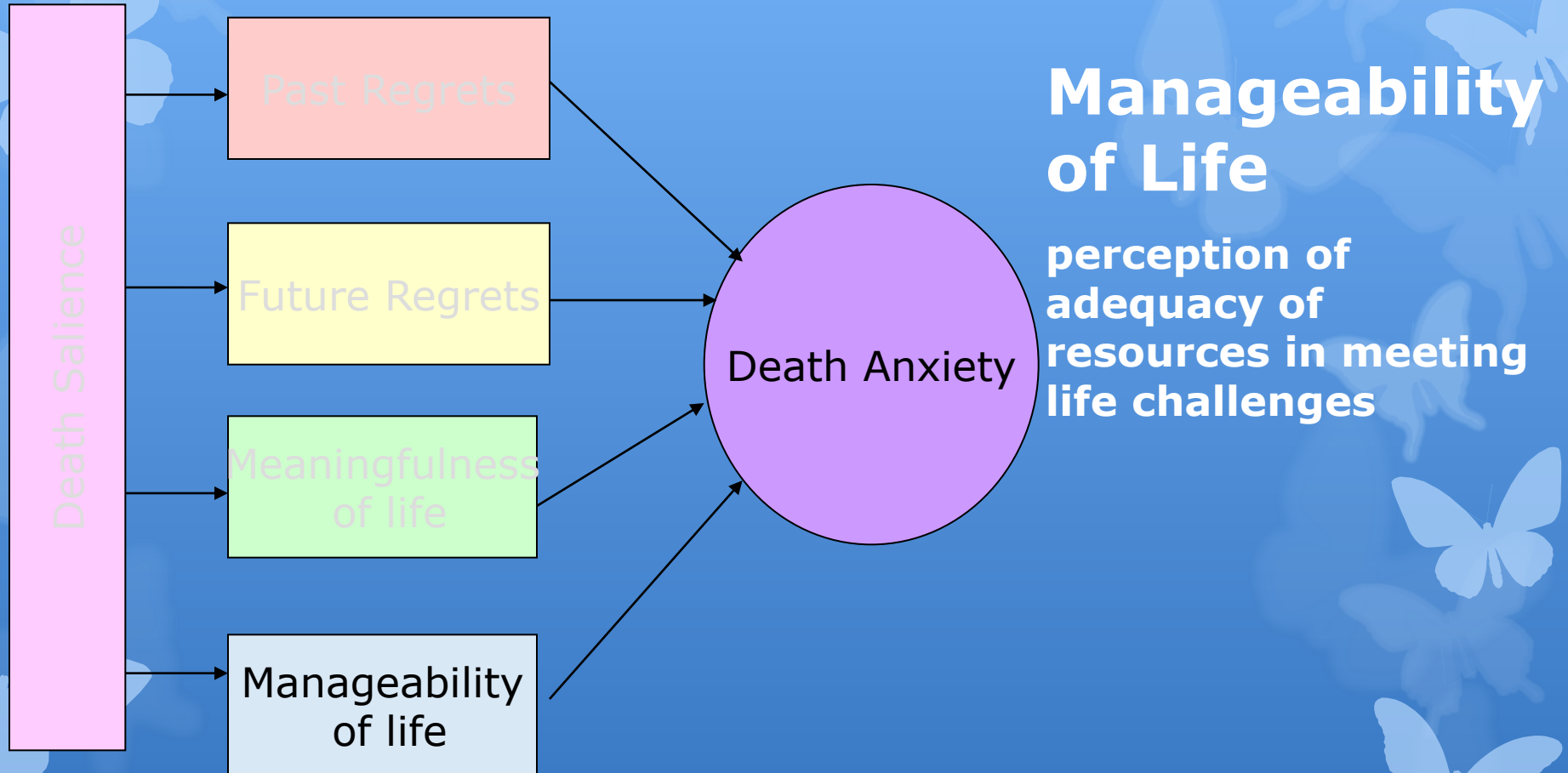
the perception of the negation of life goals that is caused by the realization of mortality in the future



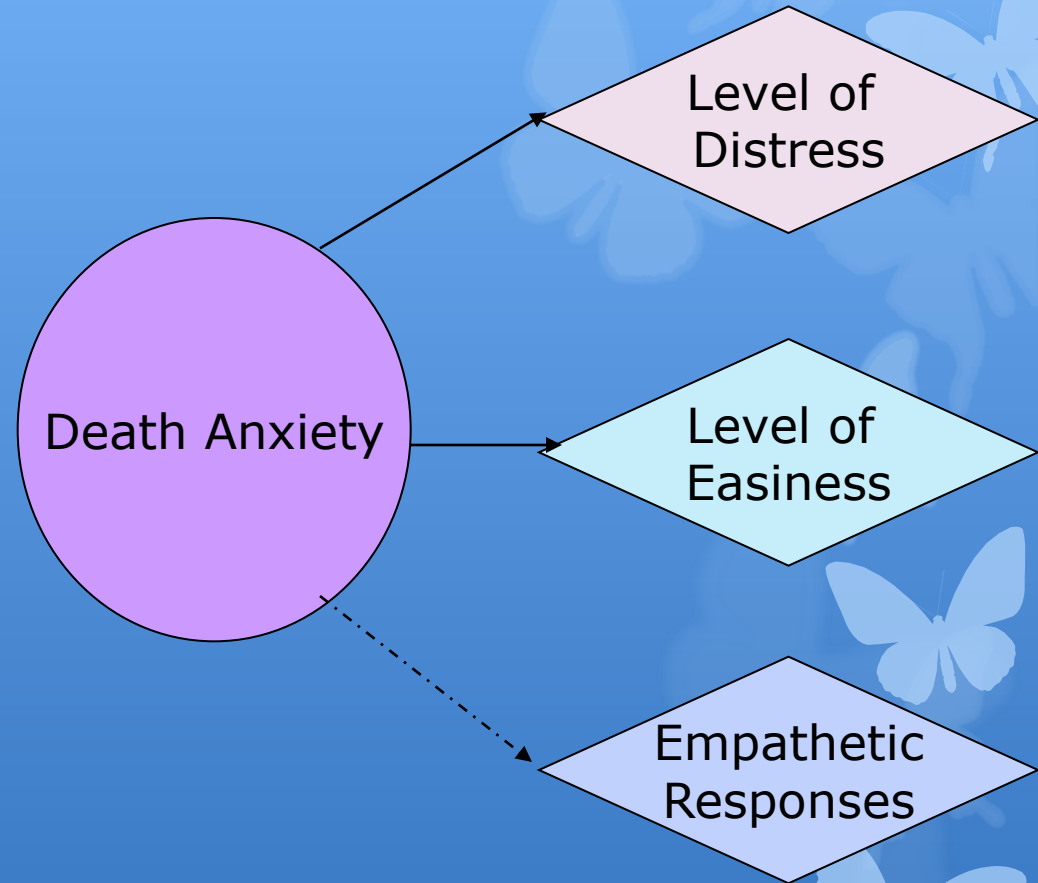
Tomer-Eliason Model (1996, 2000, 2005, & 2008)



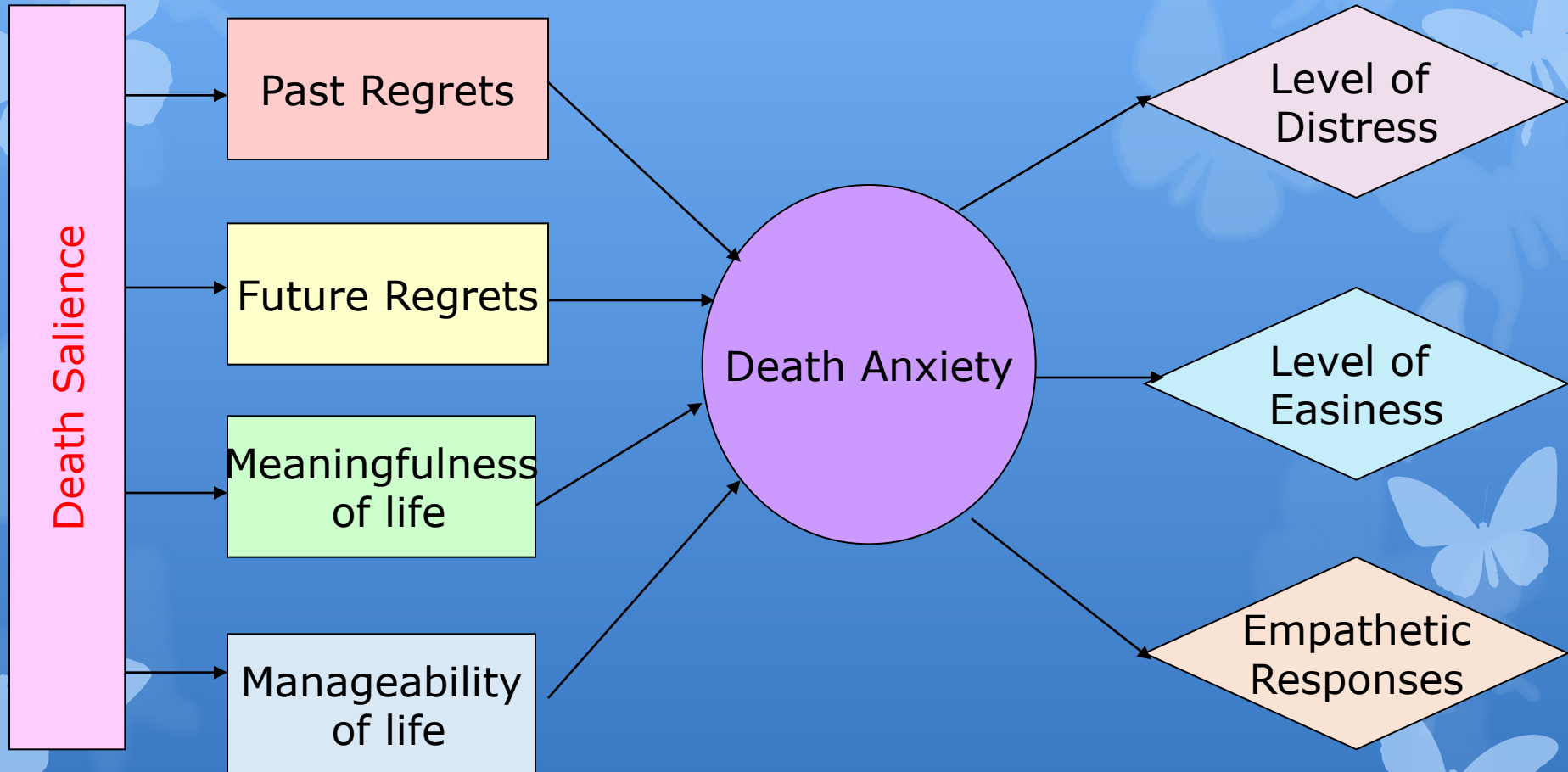
Tomer-Eliason Model (1996, 2000, 2005, & 2008)



Kirchberg, Neimeyer and James' Model



Integrated Model



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Emotional Competence

Overall Objective:

- **Reduce Death Anxiety through alternating:**

- **Death Salience**
- **Past Regrets**
- **Future Regrets**
- **Manageability of Life**
- **Meaningfulness of Life**



Design



Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working towards general fear of death

- **My ghost stories and death superstitions**
- **Visual Stimulations**



Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Past regrets

- **My Life Line**

➤ Adopted from Adventure Based Counseling



Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Past regrets

- My Life Line



Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Future regrets

- **My unanticipated Losses**

- My five most important possessions
- My five most important abilities
- My five most important roles
- My five important persons



Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Future regrets

- **My unanticipated Losses**
- **Rob by**
 - Illness
 - Accident
 - Natural Disaster
 - Fate



Illustrations of Experiential Exercises Working on Death Resilience

- My personal reflections

- My tomb stone
- My letter to my beloved

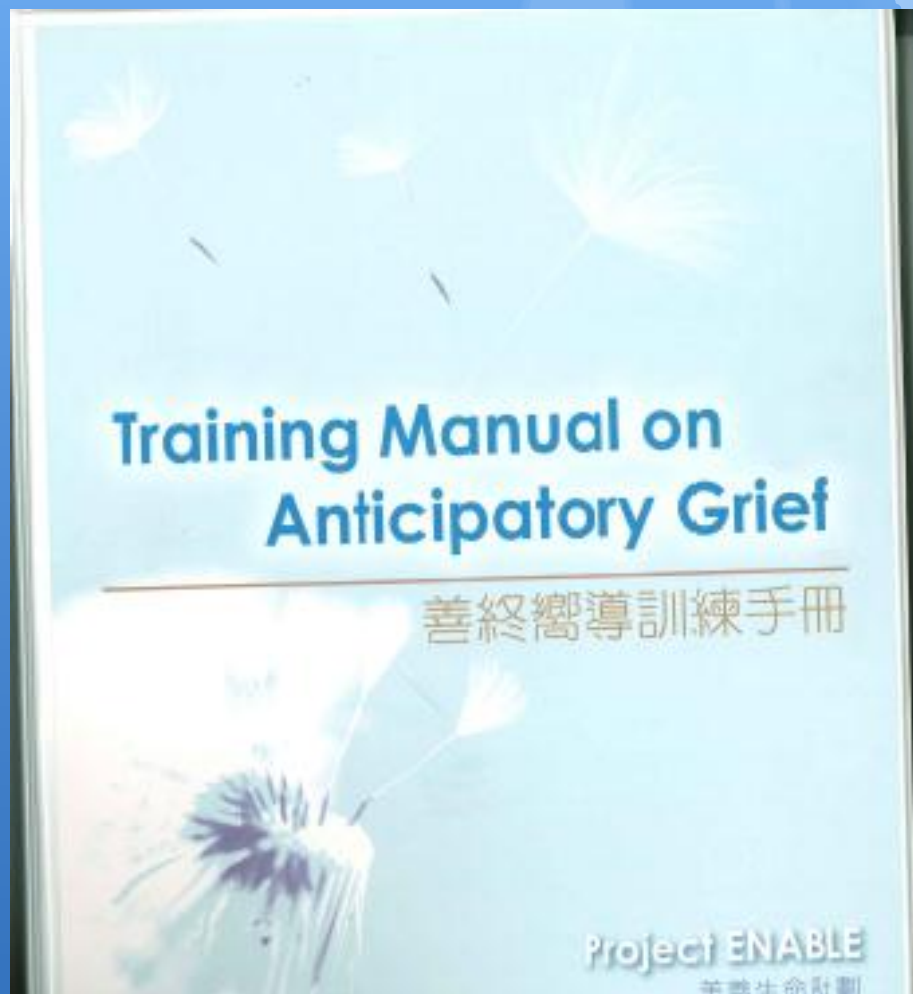


Illustrations of Experiential Exercises

Working on Death Salience

- Death Simulations





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Brief Report

289 participants

- **Gender:**

- 234 females, 55 males

- **Age:**

- mean = 36.04, sd = 9.59 (from 22 – 67)

- **Length of work:**

- mean = 8.91 years, sd = 7.84 (from 0 – 40)





Evaluation

Timing of Assessments:



Evaluation

Tools of Assessment

- **Past Regret:**

- Past-Regret Questionnaire (Tomer & Eliason, 2005)

- **Future Regrets:**

- Goal & Mode Values Inventories (Braithwaite & Law, 1985)

- **Meaningfulness of Life and Manageability of Life**

- Sense of Coherence (SOC Scale) (Antonovsky, 1993)



Evaluation

Tools of Assessment

- **Death Anxiety:**

- Multidimensional Fear of Death Scale MFODS (Hoelter, 1979)

- **Death Acceptance:**

- Death Attitude Profile-Revised (DAP-R), (Wong, Reker and Gesser, 1994)

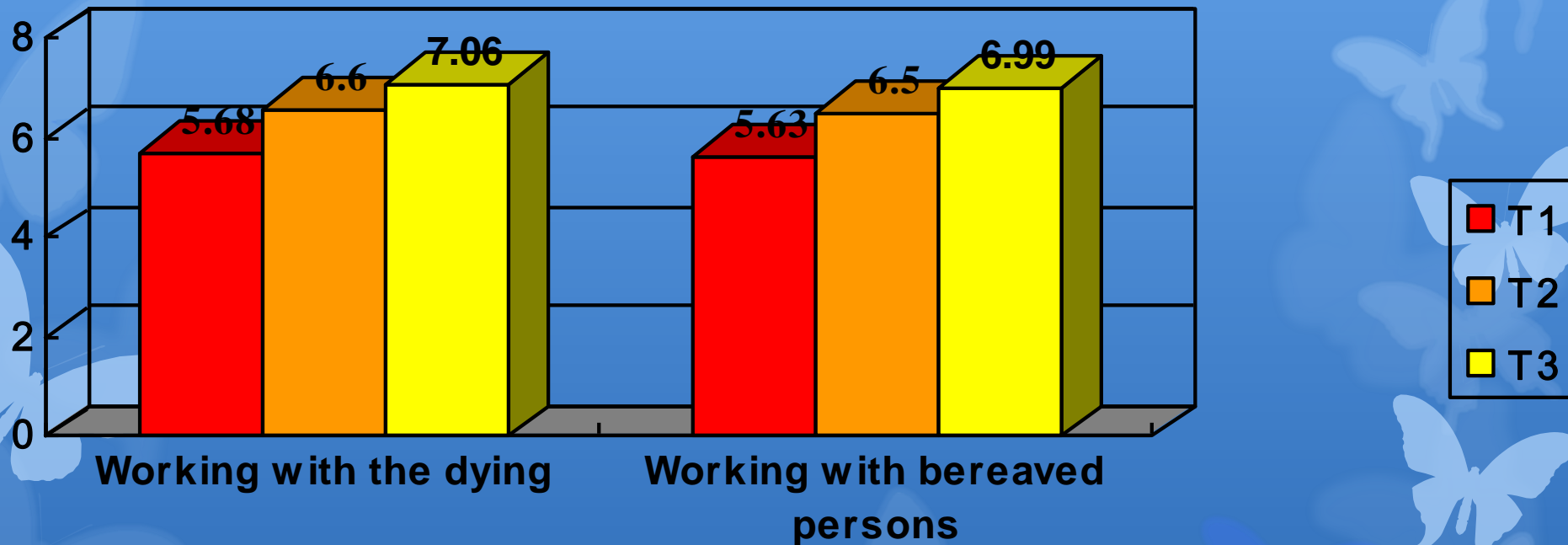
- **Competence in working with dying and bereaved**

- 4 self-invented questions



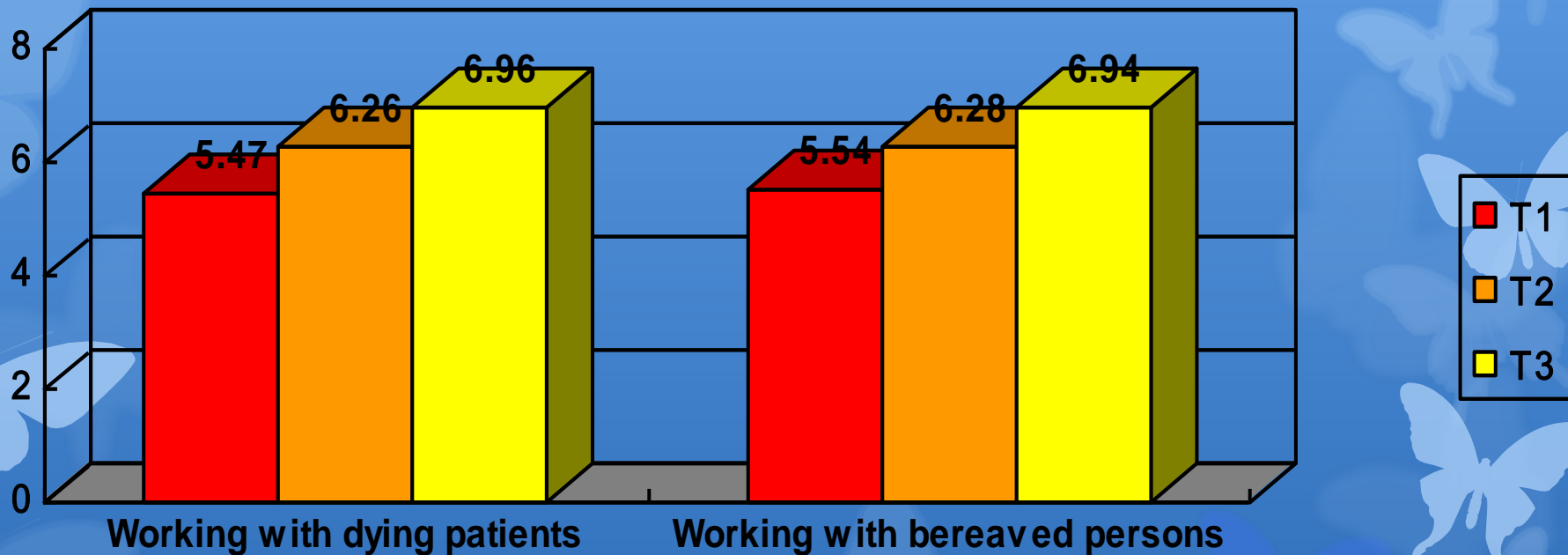
Result (Comfort Level)

Means of different dimensions of
comfort level at different time points
(N=289)



Result (Competence)

Means of different dimensions of competence level at different time points (N=289)



Result (changes over time)

T-values of comparing means of **comfort** and **competent** scores over different time slots (N=289)

(* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$)

	T value (T ₁ – T ₂)	T value (T ₂ – T ₃)	T value (T ₁ – T ₃)
Comfort level in working with the dying	8.21**	5.05**	11.68**
Comfort level in working with bereaved persons	7.88**	5.62**	12.00**
Competent level in working with the dying	8.04**	8.12**	13.87**
Competent level in working with bereaved persons	6.97**	7.74**	13.17**



Result

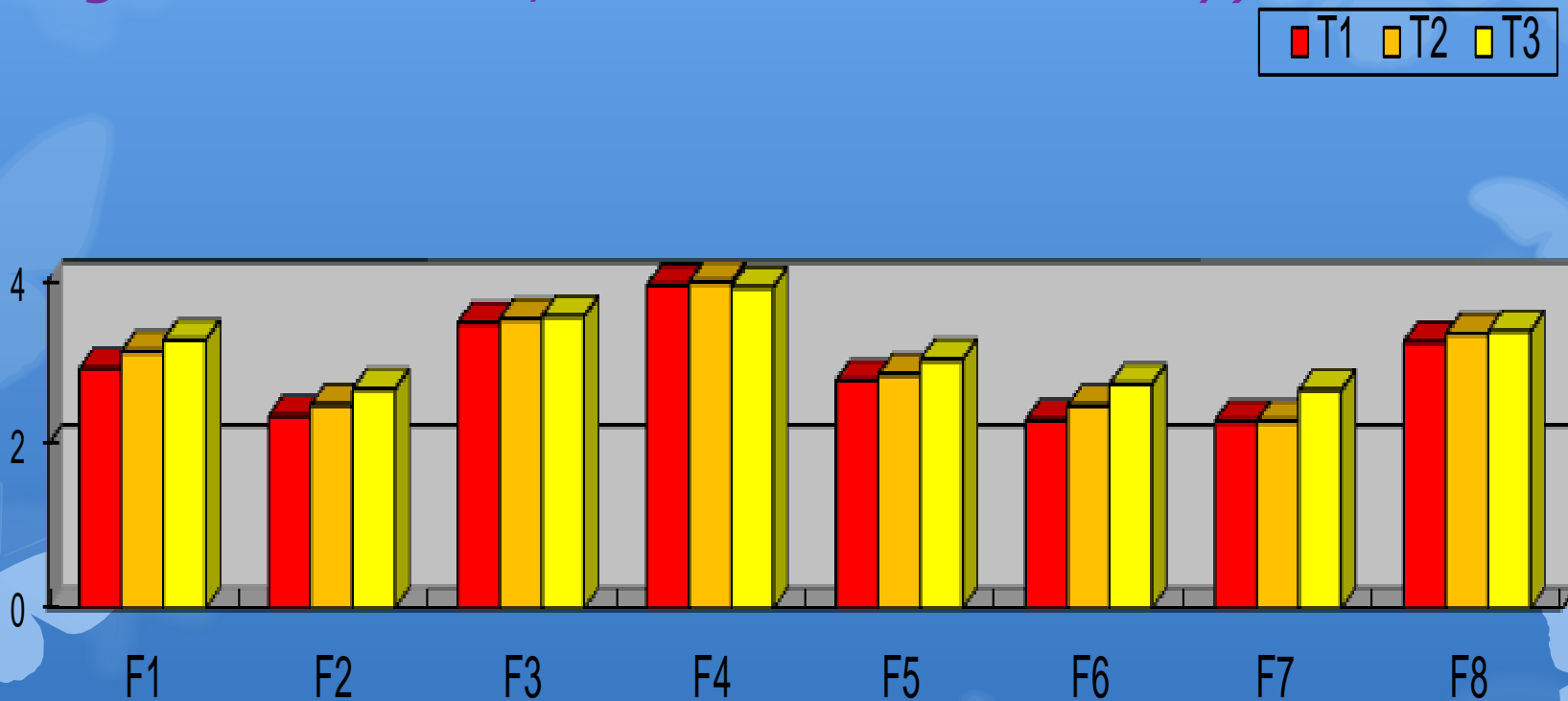
d-values of comparing means of comfort and competent scores over different time slots (N=289)

	<i>d</i> value ($T_1 - T_2$)	<i>d</i> value ($T_2 - T_3$)	<i>d</i> value ($T_1 - T_3$)
Comfort level in working with the dying	0.49	0.30	0.86
Comfort level in working with bereaved persons	0.44	0.32	0.82
Competent level in working with the dying	0.46	0.49	1.08
Competent level in working with bereaved persons	0.42	0.50	1.05



Result (Death anxiety)

Means of different dimensions of death anxiety score at different time points (N=348) (*the higher the score, the lower the anxiety*)



Result (death anxiety)

T-value of comparing means of death anxiety over different time slots (N=348)

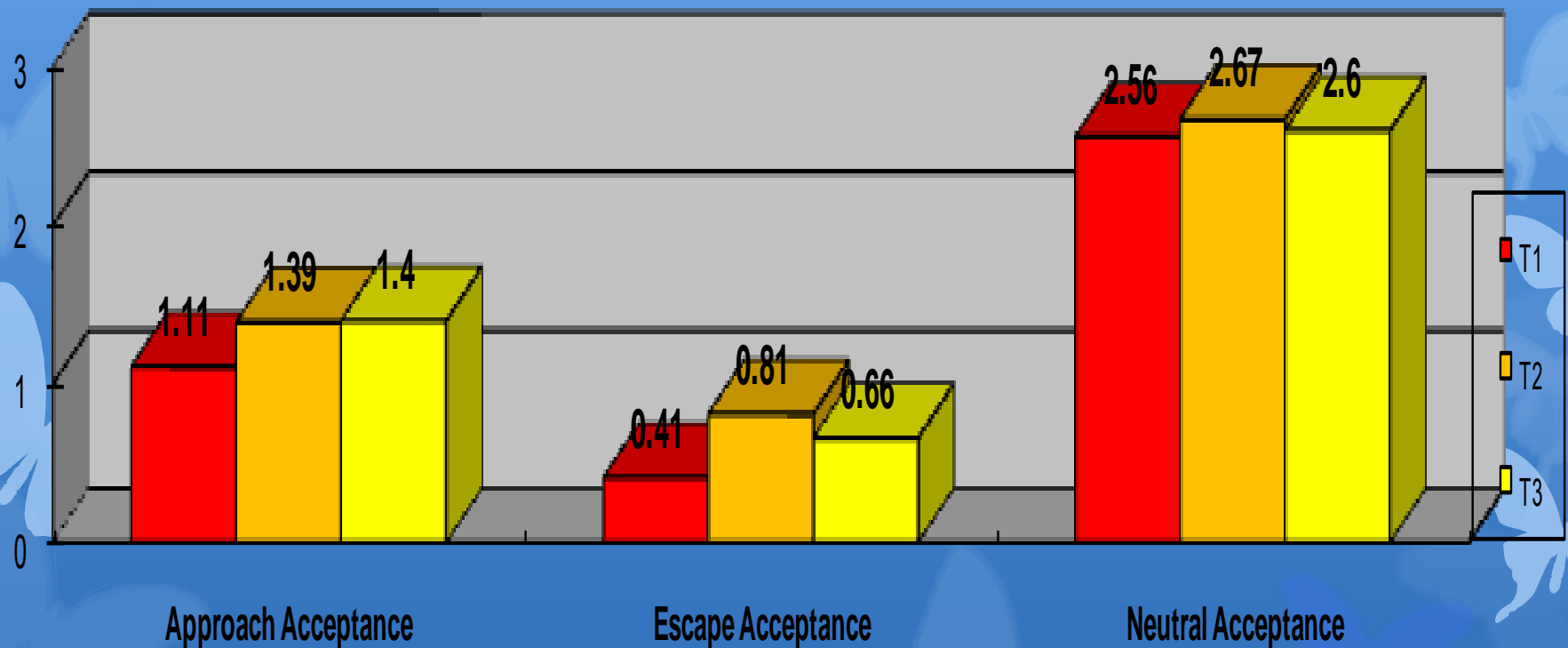
(* $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$)

	T1-T2 df = 295	T1-T3 df = 272
Factor 1 (Fear of the Dead)	6.38***	9.96***
Factor 2 (Relational Concern)	4.01***	9.57***
Factor 3 (Physical Concern)		1.99*
Factor 4 (Existential Concern)		
Factor 5 (Unfinished Business)	2.53*	6.56***
Factor 6 (Fear of Conscious Death Moment)		8.37***
Factor 7 (Fear of the Dying Process)		4.90***
Factor 8 (Fear of the Medical Procedures)	2.87**	3.35**



Result (death acceptance)

Means of different death acceptance score at different time points (N=231)



Result (death acceptance)

T-value of comparing means of death acceptance over different time slots (N=231)

(* $p < .05$, ** $p < 0.01$, ***

	T value ($T_1 - T_2$) df = 221	T value ($T_1 - T_3$) df = 199
Approach Acceptance	6.36***	4.99***
Escape Acceptance	5.74***	2.40*
Neutral Acceptance	3.07**	



Result (Meaning of Life)

T-value of comparing means of life attitude score over different time slots (N=72)

(* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$)

T value
($T_1 - T_2$)

T value
($T_1 - T_3$)

Comprehensibility

3.11**

Manageability

2.41*

Meaningfulness

4.01**



Result (Past Regrets)

T1		T2		T3		T1-T2 t df = 70	T1-T3 t df = 71
mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.		
2.13	0.38	2.16	0.38	2.10	0.36	-0.84	1.33

* The higher the score, the more regret



Result (Future Regrets)

All	T1		T2		T3		T1-T2 t df = 70	T1-T3 t df = 71
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.		
F1: Cultivating Relationships	4.69	1.25	4.75	1.20	4.80	1.95	-.121	-.469
F2: Spirituality	4.67	1.30	4.66	1.30	4.52	1.35	.045	.765
F3: Status	3.96	1.20	3.95	1.16	3.85	1.11	.100	.399

* The higher the score, the more regret



Summary

The programme can

- **improve the comfort and competent level of the participants in working with bereaved and dying persons significantly**
- **Reduce the death anxiety (fear of death, relational concern and existential concern) of the participants significantly**
- **Increase the meaning of life (meaningfulness and manageability) of the participants significantly**



How to move on?

Reflections:

- **Are life regrets a determinant for death anxiety?**
- **What are the determinants that affect the comfort level and competence?**
- **Why manageability improved?**
- **What components in the training programmes that help?**



From Anxiety to Appreciation:

Reported Changes after the camp:

- Personal level

- Better EQ, more patience to mother and colleagues
- More energy, more life energy
- Closer to God
- More aware of the importance of self care
- Enjoy life more
- Less stubborn (無咁執著)
- More kind to others 溫柔㗎



From Anxiety to Appreciation

Reported Changes after the camp:

- **Family level**

- More expressions of love (接放工、煮飯)
- Discuss advance directives with/for family members
- Sharing the eulogy with family members
- Plan for family trip
- Facilitate reconciliation of family members
- More appreciation to spouses



From Anxiety to Appreciation

Reported Changes after the camp:

- **Work level**

- More sensitive to needs of clients and their family members
- Being more comfortable with helplessness
- Being more able to listen
- Being more patience





Thank you !
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